

A D D R E S S

OF THE

STATE ANTI-SLAVERY SOCIETY,

TO THE

MINISTERS OF THE GOSPEL

IN THE

STATE OF PENNSYLVANIA.

Read and adopted January 18, 1838.

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Extract from the Minutes of the First Annual Meeting of the "Pennsylvania State Anti-Slavery Society," held at Harrisburg, Jan. 1838.

"JAN. 17. On motion of JAMES M. M'KIM, a committee of four was appointed to prepare an Address to the Ministers of the Gospel, in the State of Pennsylvania, appealing to them for their co-operation in the efforts of this Society.

"Committee—JAMES M. M'KIM, NATHAN STEM, WILLIAM HARNED and CHARLES W. GARDNER.

"JAN. 18. JAMES M. M'KIM, on behalf of the committee appointed for the purpose, reported the form of an Address to the Ministers of the Gospel, in the State of Pennsylvania, which was read and adopted, and the Eastern Executive Committee were directed to publish and distribute Five Thousand copies of the Address in the English, and Two Thousand Five Hundred copies in the German language."

ADDRESS

To the Ministers of the Gospel in Pennsylvania.

DEAR BRETHREN:—We are assembled this day to contemplate the hapless condition of more than two millions of our fellow-men, who are held in the relentless bonds of **SLAVERY**; to unite our sympathies in their behalf, and to project measures for their deliverance. As we are thus engaged, the painful spectacle of American oppression presents itself, with melancholy vividness to our view. We dwell upon the fact, that in this land, boasting of its Christian institutions, and civil liberty, claiming to be “the land of the free, and the home of the brave,” the asylum of the oppressed of all nations, one-sixth of its entire population are held in the most abject and absolute slavery. Millions of our fellow-beings, to whom we are united by the ties of a common brotherhood, are stripped of all the rights of man; denominated in law “chattels personal;” and are treated, in fact, “to all intents and purposes whatsoever,” as merchantable commodities. They are placed, by law and by usage, upon a level with sheep and oxen, and driven like brutes into the field; made to bleed under the lash of the driver; to toil from childhood to manhood, and from manhood to old age, without wages; the tender ties of husband and wife, parent and child, are not recognised, but are ruthlessly sundered, as the interest, caprice, or pecuniary necessities of the so-called owner may require. They are denied the blessings of even the rudiments of education, shut out from the light of the Scriptures of truth, their minds shrouded in intellectual midnight, and their souls sunk in the debasement of heathenism.

These are only some of the evils of American slavery: there are many others, which the system entails upon the *oppressor*, as well as the oppressed, and upon all who are in any way connected with it, which simultaneously put in their claim for our notice. But we sicken at the sight, and only now refer to them, to ask, in view of

these things, what *you*, brethren, ought to do in reference to this subject? Can you witness these oppressions on the one hand, and these sufferings on the other, and be silent? Will you not "lift up your voice like a trumpet," as did the prophet of old—"Cry aloud, spare not, and show the people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins?" Will you not refuse to truckle before a corrupt public sentiment, and scorn to act upon the principles of a time-serving expediency; and firmly and *publicly* enter your solemn protest and remonstrance against these enormities?

But we shall probably be met here, on the threshold of these remarks, with the oft repeated, and as oft refuted objection, that "the people of Pennsylvania have nothing to do with this subject. We are as much opposed to slavery as you are; but our State has washed her hands of the evil, and *Southern* slavery is no concern of ours." Admit, for the sake of argument, that *we* have no direct connexion with Southern slavery. Still, can we, professing to be *men*, with all the sympathies of men, give this heartless go-by to this subject? Does not humanity, to say nothing of religion, require you to sympathize with all who suffer? And when religion adds her mandate to that of humanity, saying, "Open thy mouth for the dumb, plead the cause of the poor and needy," can you stifle this voice, without proving recreant to your nature and your religion? Will you hearken to the appeal made in behalf of the enslaved idolater of India, or the benighted heathen of Caffraria, and, in your turn, exert your talents and eloquence in pleading their cause; and turn, at the same time, a deaf ear to the cry of your down-trodden brethren at your own door? Will you labor with your wonted zeal to spread the Bible throughout foreign lands, and make no effort to circulate this book among millions, who, in this "land of Christian light," are deprived of it? When you hear the Synod of South Carolina declaring to the world, that "there are in this Christian republic, over two millions of human beings in the condition of *heathen*, and, in some respects, *in a worse condition*," will you pass these neglected ones by, in your efforts for the "poor heathen abroad?" Can you do this, and not condemn yourselves, before God and man, as criminally inconsistent?

But you may plead, that in your hearts you pity the slave; yet between him and his master you have "no right to interfere." What! no right to speak your sentiments to all whom they may

concern? Have you so learned the rights of man, as given to him by his Creator? or the rights of American citizens, as guaranteed to them by the Constitution and laws under which they live? You have this right: and, further, *you are solemnly bound to exercise it.* The command of God is, "Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbor, and not suffer sin upon him;" and you cannot evade this command, in the matter of the *sin of slavery*, as we solemnly believe, without contracting crimson guilt.

But, brethren, when we conceded, for the sake of argument, that the people of this Commonwealth have no direct connexion with the system of Southern slavery, we did not mean to admit the truth of that argument. We, as Pennsylvanians, have a direct and special connexion with Southern slavery. We exert a positive efficiency in perpetuating it, and are therefore stained with its blood.

First. We help to perpetuate it by our laws. We are obliged, by these laws, to restore the fugitive from Southern injustice, when arrested and brought before our magistrates. If the slave, after having toiled hard without wages, and suffered much and long from the overseer's whip, should assume a right to his own body and soul, and break himself to our free State for safety, he may be taken up by the professional kidnapper, acting as the agent of the Southern slaveholder, and handed over, by virtue of our laws, to his claimant. You may have witnessed some of the suffering thus inflicted in our own State. Reflect on these things, and compare them with the law of God, (Deut. xxiii. 15,) "*Thou shalt NOT DELIVER UNTO HIS MASTER, the servant which is ESCAPED FROM HIS MASTER unto thee;*" &c.; and tell us whether we are not implicated in the sin of slavery?

Secondly. We aid in maintaining slavery at the South, by our pledge, given in the compact which binds the States together, to furnish the requisite armed force to quell domestic insurrection. Under the sanction of our pledge, to stand by and protect him from those he injures, the slaveholder is enabled to practise his oppressions in safety. From the fear of our bayonets, the slave is kept submissive under his yoke. We guarantee the oppressor security, while he lays on the whip, and "*exacts all his labors.*"

Thirdly. The abominations of slavery do not exist alone under the jurisdiction of the Southern States. Slavery, with all its fearful liabilities, and the hateful slave trade, with all its tremendous

atrocities, are tolerated in the District of Columbia, where the Congress of the United States has exclusive jurisdiction. There, dealers in human bones and sinews, have erected their "slave factories," in which they immure their victims, until they have bought up enough to make a cargo, or coffle, for the Southern market. They are then either shipped in "slavers," built for the trade, or driven, in chains, across the country to New Orleans, or some other city of the South. By the operation of this traffic, husbands and wives, parents and children, are continually sundered, in the most heart-rending manner. Under sanction of Congress, any man, who is base enough, may thus legally trample under foot all that is tender in human nature; and nothing will be exacted of him in return, save the paltry sum of Four Hundred Dollars, as license-money.

Now, we say, that the people of the North are as much responsible for these enormities, as the South—nay, more; for they have the power, and may exercise it whenever they choose, to put an end to their existence. Why then do these things continue? Because, on the whole, the North chooses that they should. Persons who sit under *your* ministry, whose moral sentiments are moulded, perhaps, by your labors, send men to the National Legislature, as their agents, who refuse to take any part in putting away these evils. This refusal receives their sanction; and thus on them, and on those who shape their consciences, rests the sin of the American slave trade.

But, lastly, the principle support which the people of the North give to the system of slavery, is their *moral influence*. We doubt not but that the main pillar of American slavery, is the public sentiment of the free States. The people of the North, and ministers of the Gospel, the most distinguished of their class, hold themselves ready to apologize for Southern slavery, when any movement is made against it. While they profess to be opposed to slavery *in the abstract*, they are ever ready to frame for it artful apologies and ingenious defences. They will defend it, now on the ground of expediency, and again, from the pages of the Bible! At one time, for the sake of the master; at another, for the sake of the slave! If sophistry fail in their efforts at reasoning, they are prompt to resort to ridicule, railing, and reproach: and if these should not avail them, the dernier resort is to brute force. You know that the North has been the theatre of such scenes for the

last few years; and if you have not seen any of your brethren betake themselves to this last mentioned expedient, you may have known them to apologize for those who have done so. If you have yet to learn this, we have not.

Thus, the highest moral influence of the North, the influence of the church, goes to protect slavery, and the consciences of slaveholders, from the arrows of the Almighty. The irritability of their sensitive consciences is allayed by the opiates furnished by Northern casuists and Northern ministers, and their mouths are filled with arguments to defend the system by their ingenuity. The Bible, and conscience, and God, and the public sentiment of the world, and all the light of the nineteenth century, direct their concentrated power against the slavery of the Southern States. This combination of moral forces is hard to be resisted by the slaveholder; and in his distress he betakes himself to the bulwark thrown up for him by his Northern apologists. Hear James G. Birney, himself but a short time previous a slaveholder, who was overcome by the array of influence alluded to, and emancipated his slaves. No sooner had he done this, than he commenced laboring with his brethren in Kentucky, to induce them to do likewise. All his efforts, however, he felt to be neutralized, by the pro-slavery public sentiment of the North: and he thus writes to a brother in Ohio:—

“I do trust, my dear sir, that the Lord will make you eminently successful in raising up in Ohio a spirit favorable to immediate emancipation. That, indeed, must be done before any large operation can be carried on in this State. One of the most formidable obstacles I meet here, is, the pro-slavery spirit of Ohio, and the other free States. You can easily picture to yourself with what exultation the slaveholder quotes to me the opinions of Dr. A., and Dr. B., and Dr. C., who, he will say, are eminent for learning and piety, and whose minds are free from the bias of interest, who live in a free State, &c. &c. It is my firm conviction, that if Ohio” (and this may be said with equal truth of Pennsylvania,) “would arise, as one man, in the dignity of her great moral and intellectual power, and declare to the slaveholders of Kentucky—‘ You are wrong; your oppression is condemned by God, and shall meet with no favor from us’—that the death blow would be given to slavery, not only in Kentucky, but throughout the whole South.

No charm could stand against the concentrated radiance of such virtuous action."

Thus you see that the public sentiment of the North is *the* obstacle in the way of the overthrow of slavery: it is the main pillar of the system. Take away this support, and if the hideous system does not fall, by virtue of its own gravity, all that is necessary is to apply the moral force of this public opinion, through appropriate channels, to the springs of action in the Southern bosom, and the days of slavery are numbered.

On whom does the responsibility of public sentiment rest? In *moral* questions, mainly on those who occupy the station of gospel ministers. No class of men exercise such a tremendous influence over the public mind, as those who hold the office you sustain. This influence may be used for lofty purposes, or grossly abused. We are sorry that, on the subject in hand, the latter is more frequently the case in this Commonwealth.

The influence of many, of the *most* of your body, so far as our observation has extended, goes to strengthen the hands of the oppressor, to perpetuate the corruptions of public opinion, and to counteract the efforts of the friends of the slave. The main obstacle (and we say it advisedly,) that we have met in our efforts, has been the supineness and opposition of *ministers of the gospel*. We say not these things in the spirit of reproach, but with the wish to direct your attention to solemn facts. In view of these things, we ask you to change your position; to take your stand, as you are bound, by virtue of your office, as leaders in this reform; to "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up your voice like a trumpet, and show the people the sin" of slavery, and call upon them to repent.

But it may be urged, that this subject is a delicate one, and that if you agitate it it will awaken hostility, alienate your people from you, and curtail or destroy your usefulness. This is a specious plea, but not one to which a Christian minister should listen. If you will hearken to God, as he speaks to you in his word, and by his Spirit and providence, he will take care of your usefulness.—Besides, what right have you thus to parley, when you have the positive command, "Thou *shalt* in *any wise* rebuke thy neighbor and not suffer sin upon him." On this head, we would refer you to some remarks of the respected Dr. Hawes, of Hartford, Con-

necticut, in a letter recently addressed to the American Anti-Slavery Society.

" But as I occupy a station of great responsibility as a minister of Christ, I have felt as if duties of paramount importance might excuse me from taking any active part in promoting the objects of the Society, and even from appearing as its open and avowed friend. I have been aware, too, that many of the people to whom I minister, and others in places where I am occasionally called to labor, entertain views different from my own in relation to this cause; and I was not willing to take a stand, in regard to this strangely misunderstood and most unpopular subject, which should awaken prejudice, or in any way prevent my doing them all the good I could as *their servant for Jesus' sake*. But I can keep back no longer. Indeed, that I have kept back *so long*, I now feel to have been wrong, though I did not intend it; and I hasten to make what atonement I can by wishing you to insert my name as a member of your Society. The movements which have of late been made to put down anti-slavery sentiments, by attacking the freedom of speech and of the press, and recently by taking the life of an innocent citizen and faithful minister of Christ, leaves me no longer at liberty to withhold what measure of influence I possess for the support of a cause, which essentially right and worthy in itself, is forced, in the providence of God, to contend for rights which every true Christian and patriot must hold dearer than life. I may not have it in my power to serve this cause to the extent of my wishes; but in a contest, like that which it is now called to maintain, both in behalf of slaves and of freemen, I wish to have it known on which side I am. I wish to be on the right side, in reference to every question of truth and duty; and which that will appear to be, in relation to the cause *now every where spoken against*, at the judgment day, I feel there is no room for doubt.

Affectionately yours,

J. HAWES.

Allow us to tell you, brethren, that if you practise upon the policy usually pursued on this subject, the very thing you profess to fear will come upon you—your Christian influence and usefulness will be destroyed—your pretensions to be ministers of the gospel will be derided; you will be regarded as time-servers and hirelings; the more pious of your hearers will be alienated from you,—and divi-

sions will arise among them, which you can never heal, while you remain with them and pursue the same course. You will thus, while you help to retard the progress of the cause of the down-trodden slave, at the same time injure the interests of your flocks, and bring a lasting reproach upon the holy office of the ministry.

We exhort you then, brethren, no longer to stand aloof from this holy cause. No longer lend the sanction of your silence, or the aid of your countenance, to those who oppose it. But "Come up to the help of the Lord, the help of the Lord against the mighty." Be not ashamed or afraid to take your stand by the side of God's poor—away with a time-serving expediency, or an imaginary policy, and "Open your mouths for the dumb." Rebuke the corrupt doctrines and base sentiments, which set in like an overwhelming tide upon every side. Listen to the cries of the poor slave, and think of the sufferings at the South—hearken to the voice of the blood of the lamented and martyred LOVEJOY, which cries from the ground, and think of the guilt of the North, and *be silent if you can.*

When you meet in the sanctuary, and your aspirations go up for the "poor heathen" of China, and the "degraded idolater" of Burmah, remember that there are millions of your own countrymen, who are as verily heathen as any class of persons in the world; and in some respects, more to be pitied—they have, superadded to the darkness of heathenism, the galling chains of Slavery. And if you mean that your hearers should intelligently and fervently unite with you, let not your prayers be vague petitions for *the oppressed in general*, but special supplications for the enslaved in our own country, in particular.

When in the exercise of the functions of your office, you essay to rebuke iniquity, forget not the sin of slavery. When you undertake to expose prevailing error, forget not the heresy now so rife in the church, doing such mighty mischief, that "the religion of Jesus Christ sanctions slavery," and licenses a man to buy and sell his brother man in the shambles.—When you make your stirring appeals to the sympathies and sensibilities of your hearers, "Remember them that are in bonds as bound with them."

When you come together in your church judicatories, to take measures for the purification of Zion, remember that there are in most religious denominations the grossest violations of the precepts of Christ, and the spirit of the gospel, in connection with the sys-

tem of slavery—and this openly and without rebuke.—Private members of churches, elders, and even professed ministers of the gospel, *hold as their property and buy and sell their brethren*; and all this without affecting in the least their standing in the church. When memorials are sent up to you from your pious parishioners, give them not the “go-by” yourselves, nor allow it in your brethren: shuffle them not off with the pretext that it is a *delicate subject*, or that the time is not opportune, or that business of more importance to the church forbids their entertainment. Place yourselves and your families, in imagination, according to the scriptural injunction, in their situation, put yourselves “in bonds, bound with” your brethren, and then ask whether you will wait for a more befitting season?

But we will press this subject no further. We are sorry that necessity is laid upon us, of reminding of their duty those who ought to be our teachers. We do it in all kindness, but desire, at the same time, to be perfectly plain and candid. Shall our appeal be in vain? Brethren, this is a solemn subject, and one which devolves upon you solemn responsibilities. We appeal to your consciences, and ask you to decide the claims of the slave upon you, before that bar. Will you not rejoice our hearts, and the hearts of all good men, by taking a Christian hold on this holy cause? We hope, we *believe* that you will. Our personal knowledge of many of you, forbids our entertaining any other than the most sanguine expectations, as to the effect of this appeal. With the sincere prayer that our highest hopes may be more than realized, we remain,

Yours, in behalf of the oppressed,

JAMES M. M'KIM,

NATHAN STEM,

WILLIAM HARNED,

CHARLES W. GARDNER.

Committee of the Pennsylvania State Anti-Slavery Society.
HARRISBURG, Jan. 18th, 1838.